

No. 8

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## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S WINNING OAR

PARAMOUNT EXCHANGE  
2007 EYE STREET N W  
WASHINGTON D C U S A

OR A HOT RACE FOR THE CUP

by MAURICE STEVENS —



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There was a sudden spurt on the part of the boat "White Wings," and frenzied shouts told that the high-school boys had won the hard-fought race.



**Publishers' Note.** "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S WINNING OAR;

OR,

### A Hot Race for the Cup.

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#### CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

**Jack Lightfoot**, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

**Tom Lightfoot**, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

**Ned Skeen**, of impulsive, nervous temperament, but a good friend of Jack's.

**Nat Kimball**, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

**Lafe Lampton**, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

**Bob Brewster**, a brawny lad, against whom Kimball tried his Jap tricks with poor results.

**Phil Kirtland**, leader of the Academy boys, and Jack's rival in all-sports.

**Brodie Strawn**, a member of the Academy boat club.

**Prof. Sanderson**, principal of the Academy, who dislikes our hero for various reasons.

**Jubal Marlin**, a Yankee boy who knew how to pull a steady oar.

**Kate Strawn**, a girl whose good opinion Jack desired.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### ON THE LAKE.

Jack Lightfoot had no truer friend in Cranford than his cousin Tom.

The fact that Tom was a student at the rather pretentious Cranford Academy, conducted by Prof. Sanderson, and was in far better financial circumstances than Jack, made not the slightest difference in their friendship.

Not a week went by but they spent more or less time together in the comfortable shed room back of Jack Lightfoot's home, where there were books in sufficient numbers to satisfy Tom's cravings as a book-worm, and, in addition, a workbench, with a goodly



supply of tools, and gymnastic apparatus of various kinds.

But neither Jack nor Tom were thinking of these things, as they rowed, in the light, two-oared boat, round Tiger Point, talking of the proposed boat race between the boys of the academy and the high school.

Jack Lightfoot was the recognized leader of the athletic boys of the high school, was president of the High School Athletic Club, and captain of the newly formed Cranford baseball nine, a nine composed of the best baseball material from both schools.

In the coming boat race, however, the lines between the two schools were to be drawn again, and it was to be high school against academy.

As Tom was an academy student, that would put him in opposition to Jack; but such athletic rivalry between the two had occurred before, and it had not marred, or even touched, their mutual respect and good will.

"As Lafe Lampton says, 'Old Snod is hot stuff!'"

It was Tom who spoke.

Jack laughed in his merry way.

"Well, it is a little singular, when you come to think of it, that a quiet, old banker and business man should take such an interest in athletics as to offer that handsome cup as a prize for a rowing match between the schools," Jack remarked.

"I rather think it is because he has taken such an interest in you," said Tom, significantly.

Jack smiled.

"He can't be sure that my crew will get it!"

"But he thinks you will, all right; I heard him saying so, myself, while he stood talking yesterday with some men, in front of Strawn's dry-goods store. And I believe Strawn thinks so, too."

"Brodie will probably pull an oar in the academy boat; so that seems strange."

Brodie Strawn was the son of the proprietor of the dry-goods store mentioned, and an academy boy.

"Strawn thinks a lot of you, you know, since you saved the life of his daughter Kate, by pulling her out of that hole in the ice. The things he has done for your fellows makes me envious. That gym. he has helped you to fix up is great, and he gives you the room rent free. So, I don't know that it's strange, after all."

Jack looked at his cousin with a smile of questioning.

"Well, what do you think?"

"Concerning which school will win that race?"

"Yes; that's what I meant."

Tom flushed.

"Now, that isn't a fair question, is it?"

"Oh, you needn't answer it," said Jack, "if it will hurt your feelings any to admit that your fellows haven't a ghost of a show!"

His tone was humorous.

"Well, I'll tell you what I think. You fellows have as good a show to win as our fellows."

"Oh-h!"

"I don't think you have a bit better," Tom asserted, earnestly, "and I say this because I believe it. Brodie Strawn will pull an oar in our boat, and there is Phil Kirtland; you haven't two better men. If you have, I'd like to know who they are?"

"And you will pull an oar there, and try as hard as you can to beat us."

"I certainly shall. We'll beat you fellows, if we can. That's the rule of the game. Why shouldn't I? Won't you try to beat us?"

Jack laughed.

"We're not only going to try to, but we're going to!" he declared, jocularly.

"Talk's easy."

"So it is. But I'll say we're going to try mighty hard to down you fellows, and I think we can."

"We'll give you the fight of your lives," said Tom, in the same good-humored tone. "Hello, we're al most at the landing!"

They had pulled along, rounding Tiger Point as they



talked, and were, in truth, almost at the boat landing now.

Cranford Lake was a beautiful sheet of water, lying like a great mirror in between the higher land and the hills on one side, where the town of Cranford nestled, and the deep, dark and forbidding woods on the other.

It was large enough for boats of almost every description, and in the summer was pretty well filled with all manner of light pleasure craft, while in the winter, when it was frozen from end to end, it rang with the cheery music of flashing skates and skimming ice yachts.

On the shore, where several people were moving about, a neat though small boathouse had been erected by the high-school boys, assisted financially by Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Strawn. Here they kept their boats, and in the rear, in a place specially assigned to it, was the ice yacht which Jack had constructed, with Tom's help, during the winter, and in which he had won some notable races.

Having disembarked from the light boat, they drew it up on the shore, and then, lifting it, carried it into the boathouse.

Not far away was a similar boathouse.

It was, however, somewhat more pretentious, and had a large L, or extension.

Phil Kirtland, whose father "had money to burn," had spent his cash rather freely in building it, and in fitting it up. In the same way, Kirtland had put money into the boats owned by the academy boys, and for that reason they were the best that could be bought.

Phil Kirtland was quite sure that the rowing crew of the high school should not win in the race that was soon to come off; for he knew that he had under him a crew that could row, and no better boats than those of the academy could be found on Cranford Lake.

Having put away the boat and locked the building, Jack and Tom went on up the little thoroughfare lead-

ing into the heart of Cranford, and, reaching one of the cross streets, turned down it and proceeded to Jack's home, and to the shed room attached to the house.

Here Tom soon had his nose buried in a book.

"What have you found so interesting in that?" Jack asked.

Tom looked up from the book.

"This is 'Snider's Manual,' you know, on boat racing, sailing, rowing, and everything of that kind."

"I know that."

"If a fellow could get these ideas thoroughly baked into him, and could use them—— Well, you fellows wouldn't have even a fighting chance in that race!"

"If" is a little word," said Jack, quietly, "but it means a whole lot. I looked that book over. The trouble is that, the men who get up such books write, as a rule, for professionals, and for rich men, who can have everything and do everything just as they want it done. One chapter there tells you how to manage an ocean racing yacht, like one of Lipton's, or those belonging to the New York yacht club, costing several hundred thousands of dollars, probably, to build. A lot of good such things would be for us fellows, in our little race here on Cranford Lake."

Yet Tom kept his nose in the book, digging away, as was his wont, hoping to come across something that would be suggestive or useful.

That was one of the marked traits of Tom Lightfoot's character.

He was forever browsing through books and magazines in search of information, and some of the things he turned up now and then had real value, as Jack had more than once learned. For instance, the plans by which Jack had built his ice yacht had been found in a book by Tom.

So that Tom's omniverous reading, besides giving him much satisfaction, was likely to be far more of a help to him in every way than a hindrance.



## CHAPTER II.

## IN THE GYM.

Tom remained with his cousin for the remainder of the afternoon and evening.

Jack read a little, and spent some time in exercise with his athletic devices, and at his workbench. He was handy with tools, and liked to make things.

Shortly after the evening meal, when it was growing dark, they left the shed room and proceeded along the street until they came to the old carriage shop.

Above this abandoned place of business was the gymnasium which the high-school boys had fitted up, with assistance from Mr. Strawn.

Some of the high-school boys were already gathering there, to do various athletic stunts, and to talk over that most interesting subject, the coming boat race, for which all arrangements had already been made.

Their tramp was heard on the stairway leading to the upper floor, and from the gym. their voices floated out on the evening air, for the day had been quite warm, and some of the windows were open.

The loud "haw haw!" of Jubal Marlin rose, as Tom and Jack climbed the stairway; and, accompanying it, was the cackling laughter of a parrot, the club's new mascot.

Jube Marlin was taking care of the gym. room now, in return for the privilege of having his "office" there in one corner of it.

His "office," as he rather proudly called it, was merely a railed-off space, in which he had installed himself, with a desk and some chairs, writing materials and the like.

On the walls of the "office" were pictures of certain captains of finance, whose ability to make money inspired a like desire in Jubal's bosom.

"Yeou can talk as much as yeou please," Jube had often declared, "but the feller that can make the stuff is the man the world is runnin' after; and I'm goin' tew be one o' them men!"

To become one of those men Jubal believed, and rightly, that a sound mind in a healthy body, to be won by abundant exercise of the right kind, is a necessity.

"By gravy, I knowed yeou was comin'!" said Jube, as soon as Jack appeared in the door. "Polly piped up fer yeou not more than a second or two ago, and I said tew Lafe at the time: 'That's a good sign; he's comin'!' "

As if to prove this, the parrot whooped:

"Hurrah for Jack Lightfoot!"

To hurrah for Jack Lightfoot, the high school and for Cranford, were things Jubal had taken much pains to hammer into the parrot's small head; he had, in fact, spent hours in training Polly so that she could yell for the high-school boys to perfection, whenever any athletic event was on.

When Tom and Jack came thus into the gym., little Nat Kimball was sparring, jiu-jitsu fashion, with big, red-headed Bob Brewster, trying to teach him tricks, and at the same time get the best of him by jiu-jitsu methods.

Kimball was thin, with a thin face and raven-black hair that always looked oiled.

The boys said he greased it every night with goose grease, but Kimball hotly denied it.

Another thing about Kimball was that he was deathly afraid of germs. To Kimball's mind the world was simply a great germ hatchery; everything he ate, or drank, the ground he walked on, and the very air he breathed, he believed to be filled with germs, that were threatening daily and hourly to lay him on a sick bed or slay him outright.

Bob Brewster had given him a fall that had sprawled him out on the gym. floor, and Kimball was now carefully polishing his hands with his handkerchief to get rid of any possible germs that might have come from contact with the floor.

"Get a broom, one of you fellows, and sweep the germs up off the floor, so that Gnat can have some



peace of mind," said Lafe Lampton, as he leaned lazily against the wall, munching an apple.

It was one of Lafe's nightly jokes, yet Kimball never learned to like it.

"You big lubber, you never think of peeling those apples you're always hogging down, and some day you'll die of the germs that are on them, see if you don't!" Kimball retorted, still polishing away at his hands.

Kimball's mother was a "germ fiend," and Nat imbibed his ideas from her.

"It's well enough to be careful, I suppose," said Tom, who had himself read some startling things in a recent magazine on the germ theory of disease. "They say cats carry measles from house to house."

"Well, I'm not eating cats, and I've had the measles," Lafe retorted, and took another bite of apple. "Hello, Kimball's forgot about the germs, and is going to do up Bob for certain this time. I want to see how that's done, myself."

Boys were talking in all parts of the room, and more were heard coming up the stairway. Some of the boys were in the trapeze, others were using the flying rings, and still others swinging Indian clubs or lifting dumbbells.

Tom Lightfoot, being an academy boy, was not a member of the club that had the use of this room for a gymnasium, but even the high-school boys liked Tom, and he was always welcome there.

"Now," said Kimball, standing up before big, red-headed Bob, "suppose you were about to hit me, or stab me, or shoot me, or anything like that."

"All right, suppose I was?"

"Well, then, as you thrust out your hand I'd grab it this way; see?"

He caught Bob by the wrist with both hands.

"Now I have hold of the hand that you were going to hit me with, or in which you held your knife or pistol. I'd get hold of your wrist, this way, with both

hands. Then I'd turn round quickly, this way, with my back to you, and jerk your arm up over my shoulder, at the same time turning your hand so that when your arm is on my shoulder the palm of your hand will be upward."

As he said the words he tried to do the things he was describing, but Bob Brewster jerked his hand away.

"Hold on, hold on!" said Kimball. "That wasn't what I said!"

"But, see here," Bob expostulated, "if you and I were fighting, do you suppose I'd let you do that?"

"You couldn't help yourself!"

"Why couldn't I?"

"I wouldn't let you."

"Oh, you wouldn't let me! Try it over again; I want to see what you're up to."

Kimball's dark eyes held a confident light.

Again he grabbed Bob's wrist with both hands, turned round quickly, at the same time with a jerk drawing Bob's arm up over his shoulder with the palm uppermost, doing it easily enough, for the big fellow did not resist.

"Now I've got you, and if I pull down hard on your wrist I can break your arm short off at the elbow."

"Well, that's a cowardly trick, anyway!" said Bob.

"But if I'm a smaller man than you, or if you're trying to kill me!"

"If you were smaller, I'd simply hammer you."

Kimball still had Bob's big arm over his shoulder, and, in that position, it was true that if he had jerked down hard on it he could have given the elbow a severe wrench, and might have broken it, or injured it seriously.

"What would I do?" said Bob. "Well, if you do pull down on that arm, I'll knock your head off. But I wouldn't let you get that far, if we were fighting, for this is what I'd do to you!"

He swung his huge, left fist straight at Kimball's



neck, and if he had planted the blow the little fellow would have been half killed.

"Now, see here," cried Bob, earnestly. "If we were fighting, I could keep you from pulling my arm that way over your shoulder. While you were pulling at it I'd simply land you one with my left, right on your jugular, and I'd knock you out; or, I could beat you in the spine, and just paralyze you. I could hammer you in the ear with my left. Now, I'll show you, and I won't hurt you."

Kimball turned about, and again grabbed Bob's arm.

By a big jerk, having been given this advantage, he tried to draw the arm up over his shoulder. Bob resisted, and Kimball could not turn the arm so that the palm of the hand rested uppermost. At the same time as Kimball made the attempt, Bob swung at him a terrible left-hander, which he stopped just before it reached Kimball's neck.

"I guess I didn't get that right," Kimball admitted, when he saw what would have happened.

"You got it all right," said Bob, with a grin; "but there's one thing which must be taken into consideration while you're doing jiu-jitsu—the other fellow's going to be doing something."

"But, when you get jiu-jitsu down right," Kimball insisted, "you can break the arm or the neck of your opponent, or so injure him that if you don't kill him he'll never be worth anything again. The aim of jiu-jitsu is to break arms, dislocate joints and disfigure or injure in the worst possible manner."

"And for that reason I say it's cowardly."

Most of the boys in the room, with the exception of a few like Lafe, who preferred chairs to standing, had gathered round Bob and Kimball.

"If the jiu-jitsu expert gets a hold," Kimball went on, "he will break the bones in any part of the body on which he secures a hold. If he gets you by the throat, he will dislocate the larynx, which will paralyze the vocal chords, so that the victim will be speechless

for weeks, and perhaps for life. If he can get a hold on the face, he sticks his fingers in the eyes of the man he is fighting, and literally pushes the eyes out of their sockets. I tell you, it's hot stuff."

Bob Brewster had listened to Kimball quietly.

"Well, Gnat, I'm astonished at you; I am, for sure! You're a member of the high-school athletic club, and talk that way—a member of a club that teaches honor as one of the things that a fellow ought always to practice."

He threw up his hands in disgust.

"Doesn't this jiu-jitsu you recommend put it into the power of thugs and highwaymen and tramps and cattle of that kind to get the better of innocent people they attack?"

"But it's not intended for such people," Kimball insisted. "The book I'm studying says particularly that it should not be taught to people who will not use it properly."

Bob laughed sarcastically.

"Kimball, this is a free country, and anybody who wants to can learn jiu-jitsu. Only the other day I saw an advertisement in a magazine, offering to teach it by mail. Now, is the fellow who proposes to teach it by mail going to inquire if the man he is teaching is all right? Does he know who he is teaching, when he doesn't see him, and never will see him? And about those books! Take the one you've got. You bought it. Anybody can buy one of those books. How are you going to keep men who oughtn't to learn jiu-jitsu from learning it?"

Bob showed his disgust.

"I believe in the straight-out, honorable, old-fashioned American method of fighting, if there is to be any fighting; and I'll bet anything I've got that a good, strong American who knows how to handle himself and his fists can knock out any jiu-jitsu fighter that ever came down the pike. Jiu-jitsu teaches trickery, treachery, and an attack from behind. That's cow-



ardly. It may do for the yellow races, but not for the game Caucasian."

Kimball was trying a defense, but Bob was hardly giving him a chance.

"Now, see here!" Bob went on. "The American method is not only not cowardly, but is the best. I've been looking into this thing, since you began to practice and monkey with your jiu-jitsu up here. An American in fighting keeps both hands free. He uses them for attack and defense; and he can escape a lot of punishment by jumping backward or forward. His practice work makes him graceful in movement. And if he has learned how to hit, and how to defend himself, he doesn't need to fear any jiu-jitsu professor that ever stepped into a gym. I can hit a punching bag with a force of over two hundred pounds at each blow, and I can land the blows at the rate of two hundred a minute. A blow sent right will knock out an opponent; but it won't kill him; it won't break his neck, nor render him speechless for life, nor any of those things you seem to think are so great."

"Just the same," said little Gnat, who never knew when he was whipped, either in an argument or any other way, "I'll get that method down fine some of these days, and then I'll show you a thing or two, even if you are twice as big as I am. And that's why I want to learn jiu-jitsu; I'm little, and I need it in my biz."

Lafe Lampton began to sing lazily to the tune of "Just Because She Made Dem Goo-goo Eyes:"

"Just because he hasn't any size,  
He thinks that jiu-jitsu is a prize.  
He says: 'See here, by Heck,  
I can break your swanlike neck,  
With jiu, or else gouge out both your eyes.'"

"And, by Heck! that's just what I can do, when I get the thing down to a fine point!" cried Kimball, when the applause with which Lafe's little effort was greeted had subsided.

"And then I suppose you'd feel proud of it?" said Bob Brewster.

"Sure! Fellows, it's this way!" Kimball swung his arms and tossed back his shining hair. "In this world you've got to get the best of the other fellow; I don't care whether it is in fighting or in business. The man that wins must down the other fellow every time. That's what makes him a winner. And when you're the victor, people don't stop to ask how you did it; they see that you're on top. And that's the thing."

Jubal Marlin clapped his hands in approval.

"By hemlock, that's right! Looky naow at them captains of finance!" Jubal pointed to the pictures of certain millionaires he had tacked on the wall of the space he called his "office." "Is anybody askin' haow them men got their money? Nit—they ain't. The world sees that them men have got the dough, and the world throws up its hands and hollers for 'em. Kimball is right, by gravy! When yeou go in tew win—win; and if yeou can't dew it one way, why dew it another."

Jack Lightfoot laughed.

"You fellows make me think of the advice which a man once gave to his son. Perhaps you've read it. Said the old man: 'My son, get money! Get it honestly if you can, but get money!'"

"And, by hemlock, he was right!" cried Jube. "If yeou've got the coin jinglin' in yeour pockets, yeou can git abaout everything else yeou want in this world."

"I don't know as it would help to win a boat race," said Jack, still laughing at Jubal's earnestness.

"Well, it might. With money yeou might buy up the judges, and they'd give the race to ye whether yeou won it or not."

"Jube, we'll have to turn you out of the club," said Jack, in an amused tone. "Such principles are shocking—perfectly shocking. But you haven't belonged here long, and likely that accounts for it."



"By gravy, money is the stuff!" said Jubal, not to be put down.

Lafe took a bite of apple, and added, humorously:

"And the way to begin is to select rich parents. What's the use of being born poor? This thing of being born poor is the greatest mistake any boy ever made."

"You fellows are like the man I read about, who was born in New York and then moved to Chicago," said Jack.

"How's that?" Jube asked.

"He simply went from bad to worse."

"Wow! Somebody please hit him!"

"If this thing keeps up," said Tom, "I shall have to do like the trees."

"How's that?" Lafe inquired, taking another bite of apple. "Put out the green things?"

"No, leave."

"I'll lick some of yeou purty soon," Jube threatened, with a wide grin.

"If you want to lick something, why don't you take that job at the post office?"

"What's that?" asked Jube, eagerly, ready for anything that had money in it. "Pshaw, he don't want to hire anybody to do fightin' for him."

"He wants to hire some one to lick stamps."

"Oh, git aout! Stop yeour kiddin'! But I was in earnest, fellows. If a feller is rich——"

"He's likely to have his name and picture on postage stamps," said Jack, "and then he'll be licked by everybody."

"Oh, stop yeour kiddin'!"

"If that's all you want," said Lafe, "just to have your name in everybody's mouth, get a toothpick factory to put it on their toothpicks, and there you are."

"By gravy, I will lick some of yeou fellers if yeou don't stop!"

"Try jiu-jitsu on them," said Tom.

When Tom and Jack walked back homeward, Tom remarked:

"I think you've got the liveliest and pleasantest set of boys in your club I ever met."

Jack was pleased, for he was proud of the club membership.

"Leave the academy and come over and join us. You'd be welcome at any time."

Yet the invitation was not given seriously, for he knew Tom would not care to leave the academy.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A HINT OF MYSTERY.

Jack Lightfoot and his cousin Tom stood for a long time, talking, at the street corner above Jack's home.

They were speaking chiefly of the coming boat race on the lake between the high school and the academy, in which both were much interested.

As they stood thus, and were about to separate for the night, Tom chanced to observe a human form, man or boy, duck down in the open lot not far away, where the shadows of night were pretty dark.

"Hello!" he whispered, touching Jack on the arm, to draw his attention, "what does that mean?"

Jack looked in the direction indicated.

Then both saw the form rise up and move across the lot in a stealthy manner, in the general direction of the lake.

"There is something queer about that," Jack declared.

"Let's follow, and see what he's up to!" Tom suggested.

From suggestion to action was but a step.

Their curiosity was excited.

"No fellow who isn't up to something would sneak along in that way," Tom averred.

"That's right; he's planning either some dark work, or a joke."



"A joke?"

"I think it's a boy, or young man; and he may think of hiding somewhere and jumping out at some one, to frighten him."

"That would be a poor joke."

"There are fellows who would think it funny."

They followed on, along the street that led toward the lake.

Once when the figure they were following came between them and a rather faint light, they saw enough to cause them to stop and gasp in astonishment.

"Why, he's masked!" Jack cried. "He's got something over his face."

"So he has! Here's a go! Maybe one of us had better run back and get Kennedy?"

Kennedy was the night watchman and constable of Cranford.

"I think we'd better keep as close to him as we can," said Jack. "While we're trying to summon Kennedy, he may give us the slip."

This did seem the best plan, and again they moved along, following the masked figure.

They could not see him at all for a little while, after he passed beyond that light; but soon again they caught sight of him, and crept behind with stealthy steps.

When they were near the shore and the boathouses, the masked individual again disappeared.

Fearing discovery if they advanced, the boys lay almost flat on the ground, watching, hoping to get the man, or boy, between themselves and the sky line.

"There he is again!" said Jack, clutching Tom's arm, as the figure once more appeared.

Then a sound reached them that caused their hearts to flutter.

"Ha! ha! ha!——"

It was the cackling laugh of the parrot, smothered, and shut off suddenly, as if a hand had caught the parrot by the neck.

"Gee-whiskers!" Tom whispered, in amazement.

"That's Jubal!"

Jubal Marlin, down there, with a mask over his face!

The thing was too astounding for belief.

The figure came out between them and the sky line, on the shore of the lake.

"That does look like Jubal," Jack admitted. "But what is he up to?"

"That's for us to find out."

"Yes, we'll see! I'm sure, though, he has some good reason for what he's doing."

Tom stared in silence at the skulking figure, then said, slowly and earnestly:

"Well, I don't want to say anything against any member of your club or high school, but you know what sort of company Jubal has kept."

"I don't think he's been with those fellows since he became a member of our club, and the club janitor."

"You know that Jubal, Nick Flint, Bat Arnold, Orson Oxx and Wilson Crane used to be called 'The Gang.' They're still called that by a good many people. Jubal and Crane are members of the baseball nine now, and have done some good work on the diamond, but I don't see as that would change their characters any."

Jack had tried to think well of Jubal and Wilson, and it hurt him to have Tom speak in that way.

Yet he knew himself that both Wilson and Jubal had not borne reputations that were any too good in Cranford.

Nick Flint and Bat Arnold were, by the Cranford citizens, considered "bad boys," and Jack had no very good opinion of them himself. But it was different with Wilson and Jubal. Jack had always thought they were mischievous, rather than mean; and that, in some questionable things they had done, they had been led and influenced by Nick and Bat, with whom they too often associated.



"I'm not going to believe any harm of Jubal until I have to," he declared.

"No, that's right; we don't want to misjudge him. Give a dog a bad name and you might as well hang him! I wouldn't want to do Jube an injustice. But his sneaking actions, and that mask he's got on, do look mighty suspicious."

As they lay thus and watched the figure, they saw it approach the boathouse belonging to the academy, on which Phil Kirtland, as has been said, had spent a good deal of money.

As has been stated, also, this boathouse stood not a great distance from the smaller one, belonging to the high-school boys, and was a much finer building in every way.

It had, in addition to the boathouse proper, a side wing, or extension, in which some extra boats, oars and other things were kept.

While the figure was sneaking toward the boathouse, another figure came dimly into view from a point in the darkness somewhere along the lake shore.

"He's got some one with him," said Tom, fairly trembling now with excitement.

"Yes, I see! I don't think this fellow is masked, though; but I can't tell."

The first figure seen vanished behind the boathouse, and a moment later the other disappeared, apparently at the same point.

"They've come together there," said Tom, half rising. "I guess we'd better try to get closer."

Jack rose somewhat reluctantly.

"There's one thing, Tom," he said. "We haven't seen anything to make us sure those fellows aren't down here on an honest mission, except the mask and their sneaking manner."

"The way Jube shut off the parrot, when it started to make a noise, was something!" Tom answered. "I don't blame you for not wanting to believe that your

fellows would do anything wrong, but, just the same, I'm going to find out what they are up to."

"Yes, that's all right; and I'm with you in that."

They moved closer to the new boathouse, moving side by side, and making no more noise than if they were a pair of creeping cats.

Jack was bewildered. It was not in his heart to suspect Jubal Marlin of anything wrong, and he was still refusing to do so.

Nevertheless, he was resolved to find out what this strange visit to the lakeside and the boathouse at that time of night meant.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

Nothing more could be seen in the vicinity of the boathouse, and nothing could be heard.

The placid lake slept in peaceful quiet, hardly disturbed by the ripple of a wave on the shore.

About the boathouse the shadows lay heavily, as deep as the silence that had now fallen on everything.

"We'll creep around to the front," whispered Jack, leading the way. "I begin to think he went on, and didn't stop at the boathouse at all."

"We'll see," said Tom. "Maybe he did. It looks, though, as if he had wrung that parrot's neck; I haven't heard another squawk out of it."

They gained the rear of the boathouse, and began to circle slowly round it, listening at intervals. All they heard was the soft lapping of the waves, and their own heavy, excited breathing, which sounded to them very loud.

Having gone round to the front of the house, the side that faced toward the lake, they saw the door slightly ajar.

As they did so, they beheld also a strange glow, like that of a hidden fire.

Jack's resolution was taken instantly.

In spite of his desire not to misjudge Jubal Marlin,



that gleam of fire had such a suggestive and dangerous look that he felt the time for positive action had come.

"Stay out here," he whispered. "I'm going to see what that is."

"I'll go with you."

"No; there were two of them, we thought; stay here and watch out for the other. If I need you I'll call for help."

"You're going in?"

"I don't know; I'm going to take a look."

He moved away, leaving Tom out there in the darkness, panting and quivering from the effect of the nervous strain.

It was not bodily fear that stirred Tom Lightfoot.

In his way, he was quite as courageous as his cousin Jack; but the excitement of the stealthy pursuit, and the air of mystery clinging about the whole thing, made his heart jump and his breath come quick and fast.

Stooping down, he now felt about on the sand at his feet, hoping to find a stone or a club which he could use in case of need, for he had little in the way of a weapon on his person, aside from his small pocket-knife.

He found nothing, and he feared to search far.

As he thus felt about, watching the door through which Jack had vanished, there came a sudden blinding flash and the sound of an explosion; then the glare of a fire and a thud of pounding feet.

At almost the same instant the door of the boathouse flew open and a form leaped out.

Tom Lightfoot sprang at this figure, stretching out his hands to catch and detain it.

He touched the coat, then was hurled aside, as the figure dashed on.

But something—the parrot as he knew at once—fell almost at his feet, where it had been dropped.

"Ha-ha-ha—hah-hah-hah!" squalled the startled bird. "Hurrah for Cranford! Hurrah for Jack Lightfoot!"

Jubal, with infinite pains, had taught it to shout thus for Cranford and Jack.

The flare and glare of fire within the boathouse flashed into a blinding flame.

For an instant Tom Lightfoot was stupefied.

Then he gathered his wits together and rushed to the open door.

"Jack!" he called. "Jack! Jack!"

There was no answer.

Tom threw the door open wider and sprang into the building.

The fire was not in the main building, but in the wing, or extension, to be reached by way of an inner door; and not seeing, or hearing, anything of Jack Tom ran toward this door, still calling his cousin's name, while his heart leaped with fear and dread.

At the door he was met by a whirl of smoke and flame.

He staggered back before it.

"Jack! Jack!" he shouted.

When there was still no answer he tore from a boat the canvas that covered it; and wrapping this hurriedly round his face and head as well as he could, he made a leap through the fire.

That quick, wild jump took him through and beyond the fire, which was burning only at the doorway entrance; and, having cleared it, he looked about, through the thick smoke.

There, on the floor, lying with hands stretched out, was Jack Lightfoot. The light of the fire showed him plainly.

The sight almost paralyzed Tom Lightfoot; for his first thought was that Jack was dead.

Then he seized Jack and tried to lift him.

"Jack!" he shouted; "Jack!"

Jack moaned.

"We've got to get out of here Jack!"

He took the canvas, which had fallen from his shoulders, and wrapped it about the head and body of



his cousin; and, having thus protected Jack, he began to drag him toward the doorway, but stopped, frantic and wild, when he saw how difficult it would be to make his way through there with such a burden without inviting the death of both.

Just at hand he saw a window. His brain clearing, though the smoke was choking his lungs, he recalled now the physical features of the boathouse, with which he was familiar, having been in it often, for he was a member of the athletic club of the academy and of the academy rowing crew.

He dragged Jack to the window, smashed the frame and the panes with a heavy kick, and drew Jack up to the opening thus made.

"Jack! Jack!" he cried, trying to arouse some life or consciousness in his cousin.

But Jack lay in his arms as if dead.

With a strength born of much athletic practice, he lifted Jack Lightfoot bodily, hoisted him to the low window ledge, and, throwing himself upon the ledge at the same time, they both rolled through the broken window and out of the boathouse wing.

As they did so, they heard a galloping of hoofs and the creaking and rattle of some vehicle.

Then the voice of Jerry Mulligan, the Cranford carter, rang through the darkness.

"Whurroo! 'Tis the boathouse on fire, begobs!"

Jerry had been on another street with his cart. He had been engaged in moving the household effects of a family from one part of Cranford to another, and was taking his last load at that late hour, desiring to finish the work that night.

With him in the cart at the time were the father, the head of the family, and his oldest son, Jim. The name of the family was Bouton, but the Cranford people called it Button; and Pap and Jim Button were familiar Cranford figures, belonging to the poorest class of the town, and being often shiftless and unreliable.

The load that Jerry had in his cart consisted chiefly of tattered quilts and blankets and old bedding.

He and those with him were not very far from the boathouse when Tom and Jack tumbled in that wild way through the broken window.

Seeing that they were safe, and deeming the extinction of the fire the thing now of most importance, Jerry did not stop to inquire who they were; he thought they were boys belonging to the academy athletic club. It would be a disaster to Cranford, he felt, to let that handsome boathouse go up in flame and smoke.

"Her-re!" he cried, throwing down the lines and leaping to the ground, bellowing to the Buttons. "There's no wather to be had, likely, nearer than the lake, an' that's too fur, whin yees ar-re in a hurry! Toomble thim things out here quick, and we'll use thim fer wather. T'row thim down her-re; av we bur-rn thim, Misther Phil Kirtland, who built ut, will buy yees new wans, an' I know ut. T'row thim down her-re!"

Jerry was obeyed with alacrity; and the father and son leaped to aid him in his efforts to extinguish the fire.

The fire had been started in some inflammable material near the dividing door between the main house and the extension.

Here some shavings, or something of the kind, had been heaped up. Over a portion of this some inflammable fluid, kerosene, perhaps, or more probably gasoline, to judge by the explosion, had been poured.

So far, however, the heavy woodwork had not been effectively attacked by the fire. Yet it flashed on high and sent out a great volume of smothering smoke.

Into the boathouse Jerry and his assistants rushed with their blankets, quilts and other things, and by slapping at the fire, and choking it down, with them, they began to get the better of it, after a short and sharp fight.

Meanwhile, in the town the cry of "Fire!" had been



sent up; the fire bell was ringing, and people were already running toward the boathouse and lake.

Outside, Tom Lightfoot, his hands and face somewhat scorched, but with injuries that amounted to nothing much, was trying wildly to restore Jack to consciousness.

He bent over him, calling his name in an excited way, chafing his hands at the same time, and trying every device he could think of in the excitement of the moment.

Jack responded somewhat to these efforts, as the people from the town began to arrive.

Jerry and the Buttons were already getting the fire under control. It was plain that the attempt to fire the boathouse, if such an attempt had been made, as seemed certain, would not be successful.

"What's the matter here?" one of the men from the town cried, reaching Tom and Jack.

"It's Jack and Tom!" said Kennedy, the night watchman. "Is Jack hurt?" he asked, stooping by Tom's side.

"Yes—yes," Tom stammered. "I thought he was dead, for a while. He—he was in there, and I broke a way out through the window, and we rolled through the window out here, and—but I think he is coming round. Jack! Jack! Don't you know me?"

Tom was quivering with excitement, nervousness and dread.

Jack sat up in a dazed way, assisted by Tom.

Kennedy ran on to the door, and entered the boathouse.

"What were you doing in there?" some one asked of Tom. "Did you find Jack in there?"

The questioner knew that Jack Lightfoot was not likely to have any business in the academy boathouse at that time of night, whatever excuse Tom Lightfoot might put up.

Another form pushed into the midst of the growing crowd—the form of Prof. Sanderson, of the academy, Jack Lightfoot's old and implacable enemy.

## CHAPTER V.

### SUSPICION.

Prof. Sanderson was not likely to let slip any opportunity whereby he might damage the reputation of Jack Lightfoot, being a narrow-minded, hypocritical man, with a great capacity for hating. He had not liked Jack's father; and for that reason alone he did not fancy Jack, who had never harmed him, or said an evil word of him.

Jack seemed hardly to know where he was, or what had happened to him, yet the professor shot at him this question, with sharp emphasis:

"What were you doing in the academy boathouse, Jack, at this time of night?"

Jack did not answer. It is doubtful if he even heard.

"You helped him out of there, you say, Tom?" the professor now demanded.

Tom Lightfoot was too much distressed by his cousin's condition to heed the professor's inquiry.

He bent over Jack, lifting him in his anxiety; and, some others coming to his aid, Jack was carried further out on the sand, where he was placed on some coats and made comfortable, while one of the boys who had arrived rushed down to the lake to get water to bathe his face and head.

The fire was almost extinguished, stamped out, and beaten out, by Jerry and the Buttons.

"Whurro; but I t'ought the boathouse was goin'!" Jerry sputtered, emerging now, his face blackened and his hands burned. "But we put it oot. Phere is Jack, bedad?"

Jerry was Jack Lightfoot's warm friend and admirer.

Phil Kirtland had arrived in hot haste, summoned by the outcry that the academy boathouse was on fire.

He came up as Jerry was crossing from the boathouse to the spot to which Jack had been borne.

"I think Jack Lightfoot could tell who started that



fire," Jerry heard Prof. Sanderson say to Kirtland. "Tom, who happened to be here in some strange way, pulled him out of the boathouse, or probably he would have been burned in it."

"What was Jack Lightfoot doing in the academy boathouse?" Kirtland asked, in amazement.

"I don't know, and I'm not making it my business to guess; but why should anyone want to burn it, right at this time?"

Kirtland looked at Sanderson sharply.

Jerry had stopped to listen.

"Do you mean that?" Kirtland asked; for he was quick to see the drift of the professor's hint.

"I haven't accused anybody," said Sanderson, evasively, lowering his eyes and poking at the sand with his ebony cane, at the same time pulling nervously at his benevolent, flowing side whiskers.

"Begobs, and ye'd better not accuse anny wan, av yees ar-re m'anin' Jack Lightfoot!" cried Jerry, stepping up to him, and baring his smoked and burned red wrist, as he slipped up his sleeve. "Ye're the perfessir of Cranford Acadimy, bedad, but that don't give yeez leave to shlander sich a b'y as Jack Lightfoot, and I won't stahnd ut, d'ye undherstand?"

The professor flushed a painful red.

"I wasn't speaking to you, Mulligan!" he said.

"Bedad, though, I'm sp'akin' to you! I'll smash ye're head in as if it was a punkin, av yees say anny-thing ag'inst Jack."

"Here, here, Mulligan!" cried Kirtland. "You're forgetting yourself!"

"Am I? I don't think ut. It's the loikes av him that's forgittin' himself, begorra!"

Then Jerry moved on, having relieved his mind to his perfect satisfaction.

"To be insulted in this manner!" said Sanderson, stabbing the sand angrily with his ebony cane. "And on account of Jack Lightfoot!"

He choked in his impotent rage, and, turning, walked away.

Phil Kirtland went over to where Jack was sitting on the coats, surrounded by a group of men and boys.

"Stand back and give him air!" cried Tom, who was fanning Jack with his hat. "What's the use of crowding about him in this way?"

"Just a question," said Phil Kirtland, looking at Tom and Jack. "What was Jack doing in the boathouse?"

"He went in because he saw a flash of fire in there, and thought likely some one was trying to burn it."

"You saw him go in?"

"I ought to; I was with him!"

"Who started the fire?"

Tom hesitated. He did not want to accuse Jubal Marlin.

"I'll see you about this later, Phil," he said, in a tone that showed he did not want to be questioned. "I'll explain the whole thing to you later, so far as I understand it myself."

Kirtland turned away. Going into the boathouse, which was now filled with curious people, he inspected the damage done, which was not large. The paint had been scorched, and some of the wood of the walls had been burned in places.

Jack came back to the boathouse.

"Mr. Kirtland," he said, "yeez don't owe me anny-thing for phat I did in helpin' to put out that fire; but yeez do owe thim Buttons a few dollars, for the blankits an' other things we ruined in gittin' the fire out."

Kirtland was about to say that he would pay it, when a strange squawk was heard. The parrot, frightened, and forgotten for a time, had found its voice, and piped up. It had hopped out of the way of the feet of the trampling people, in the direction of the lake; but now had hopped back; and shrilled out with so loud a cry that those near it fairly jumped in astonishment;



"Ha-ha-ha—hah-hah-hah! Hurrah for Jack Lightfoot! Hurrah for Cranford!"

Phil's dark face darkened still more.

"Who brought that bird down here?" he asked.

He knew the parrot was in charge of Jubal, that it was kept the greater part of the time in the gym of the high-school boys, and that they called it their mascot.

"Ut's hollerin' fer Jack, bedad!" said Jerry, immensely tickled.

"It is," said Kirtland; "but I think it's choosing a very poor time in which to applaud him!"

"What do yeez mean by that?" Jerry demanded, suspiciously.

"I simply mean to ask how that parrot came to be down here?"

He turned to Tom.

"Do you know how that parrot came to be down here?"

"Kirtland," said Tom, almost angrily, "I told you that I'd explain everything I can to you as soon as I have time."

## CHAPTER VI.

### SOME EXPLANATIONS.

In his room at home that night, when he had recovered sufficiently to be able to talk and think clearly, Jack Lightfoot made a statement to Tom, and to Lafe Lampton, and some other friends who were there and had taken him home.

"When I ran into the boathouse I saw some one in the extension. He was stooping over the shavings and had set fire to one edge of the heap. It was burning slowly, and he was blowing at it to make it burn faster.

"I couldn't tell who he was, for he had something over his face—a handkerchief, or something of that kind—but I rushed at him, for I saw what he was up to.

"He heard me, and sprang to the door. He swung a blow at me, but missed me; and just as he did that the fire reached the kerosene, or whatever it was, and the explosion came.

"That seemed to throw me back into the extension; and then something, I think it was an oar which the explosion shook down, struck me on the neck and shoulder. If the blow had been a little harder I think it would have broken my neck. It knocked me out.

"The next thing I knew, I didn't know anything; and then I seemed to come to myself, and found all those people about me, and a great hullabaloo going on. I was dizzy, and too weak and sick to understand very much; but I know I felt glad that the boathouse had been saved."

"You're all right now?" Tom asked.

"I think so; or, I will be all right by morning. But I'm wondering who it was set that fire, and why?"

"We thought we were following Jubal, you know."

"I don't believe that was Jubal!" said Lafe, sturdily. "You didn't get to see his face."

"No; but the parrot! What about the parrot?"

"Some one could have got into the gym. after Jubal went away, and taken the parrot," Jack urged.

"What would he want to do with it?" Tom demanded. "He couldn't keep it. No one could hide a bird like that; it would make a noise, and give the thief away."

"I hope you don't really believe that Jubal set that fire!" said Jack, turning to Tom.

"I don't know what to think. I'm just asking questions."

"Well, I don't!"

Voices were heard in the yard, and there came a rap on the door below. A moment later, when Mrs. Lightfoot went to the door, the boys upstairs heard Nat Kimball and Jube Marlin inquiring about Jack.

"Ask mother to send them up here," Jack requested.



Tom obeyed; and Jubal and Nat came upstairs into Jack's room.

Jubal carried in his arms the parrot, which some one had turned over to him as its rightful keeper.

Jube's face was flushed, and Nat Kimball seemed excited.

"By hemlock, there's some caounfaounded lies bein' told abaout me, and I don't like it!" Jube declared, almost as soon as he came into the room. "Nat's been tellin' me abaout 'em; and I'll thump the tar aout of the fellers that's circulatin' 'em."

Jack was not in bed, and had not been in bed; he was half reclining in a big chair.

"What are the lies?" he asked.

"Well, it's bein' told raound that I must have had something to do with that fire, because the parrot was faound daown there. Haow it got daown there stumps me, tew! I didn't git tew the fire till late, after it was aout; and there the gol-darned parrot was, hoppin' raound and yellin' like sin."

Jack looked at Jubal earnestly.

Tom was watching him, too.

It will be remembered they had thought Jubal must be the person seen masked, because that party had carried the parrot. Nor had Tom forgotten that Jube's record was not altogether of the best.

"When you left the gym., Jube, did you go straight home?" Jack asked.

"I stopped on the street a little while, tew talk with some of the fellers; after that I went straight home."

"And left the parrot in the gym.?"

"That's jist where I left it. I locked the door, and somebody unlocked it. But them liars aout in taown ain't only flippin' their lip abaout me, they're talkin' abaout yeou, tew; and they're sayin' that yeou must have been mixed up in that thing."

Jack flushed.

"Who said it?"

"I think it come first from Prof. Sanderson. That's

the idee I got, anyhaow. But I says to the feller who spoke of it tew me: 'That's a lie; Jack Lightfoot ain't that kind!'"

Jack still looked at Jubal steadily.

"I'm going to be quite frank with you, Jube, and tell you just what Tom and I saw. We were on the corner up here, talking, and Tom was about to start on home, when we noticed some one, with a handkerchief or something over his face, sneaking along across lots toward the lake. We thought it queer, and we followed. Then we heard the parrot squawk. That made us think at first it must be you; for you are the one who takes care of the parrot. For myself, I didn't know but you were up to some kind of lark. We saw the fellow go to the boathouse; and we saw another fellow out there in the darkness. Finally, after slipping round the boathouse, we saw a light in it, and I went in to see what it meant. Then the explosion came, and an oar or something hit me; and after the fire was out, or about that time, the parrot was found there."

Jubal Marlin had flushed scarlet. He was angered, too.

"By hemlock, it don't make me feel any tew good tew have yeou fellers think I'd go sneakin' raound with my face covered up that way!"

"I don't think now that you did. I believe every word of what you've told us."

"But others may not, by gravy! They'll be sayin' that I started that fire."

"Jube, they're going to suspect me more than you!"

"They won't, neither. A good many people in this taown ain't got any very good feelings toward Jube Marlin, an' they'll be willin' to believe any old thing abaout me."

"I'll tell you what they're going to think, some of them," said Lafe; "they're going to say that members of the high-school crew or gym. club tried to burn that



boathouse, simply because of a dislike of the academy crowd."

"They'll be more likely to say it was done because our fellows were afraid to race against the crew from the academy. They'll say we wanted to get out of it, or postpone it, and hoped to do so by destroying the boats of the academy boys," supplemented Ned Skeen.

"Oh, they'll have plenty of things to say!" grunted Lafe, shifting uneasily on his sturdy legs. "But let 'em say it! What's the dif.?"

"It makes it mighty unpleasant," said Jack.

"Oh, what's the difference?" urged Lafe. "Let 'em talk! There's a lot of gabbers in this town who've got to talk about something. This will fill 'em up for a week or two, and they'll be happy. Let 'em talk!"

He found some loose peanuts rattling round in his pockets and began to munch them. Whenever Lafe Lampton could set his jaws on something to eat he felt better.

"The thing I regret worse than anything," said Jack, "worse even than any talk that may be made about me, is that I'm afraid it will create more hard feelings between the academy boys and the boys of the high school. We've had a lot of that in the past, and I've been hoping we'd be able to get along without it in the future."

"There will be nothing of that kind," said Tom, speaking up for the academy. "You must recollect that I was down there with you. If any charges are made they'll have to be made against me as well as against you. I'm an academy boy, so it is certain that I wouldn't want to fire the academy boathouse."

For a long time there, in Jack's room, the boys talked over the exciting incidents of the night.

When they went away all were satisfied that here was a mystery, and that Jubal Marlin had no more to do with setting that fire than the man in the moon.

## CHAPTER VII.

### KIRTLAND'S ACCUSATION.

Though Jack Lightfoot had many warm friends in the town of Cranford, he yet had a few bitter enemies; and these enemies were seizing on the mysterious fire in the boathouse to damage Jack's reputation all they could.

Soon the attempted burning of the boathouse was being accounted for by a story which one of these enemies set afloat.

In this story it was held that Jack had set the fire, and Tom Lightfoot had tried to keep him from doing it. A fight between the two cousins had followed, in which Tom had hit Jack such a blow on the head that Jack had been nearly killed.

Jack's object in trying to burn the boathouse, this story claimed, was enmity against Phil Kirtland, combined with a fear that Kirtland's boat crew would win in the race which was to be rowed against a crew led by Jack.

By burning the boathouse, it was said, Jack would stop the race, and at the same time strike Kirtland, for it was known that Kirtland's money had been used largely in the building and in paying for the boats.

This specious story was circulated diligently by Jack's enemies, and was mouthed everywhere by the gossips, so that in a little while everybody in Cranford had heard it, and some people were ready to believe it.

Who started it, or how it had started, no one seemed to know. Such things seem to rise from nowhere, after which they are blown about like leaves in the fall.

The story, of course, reached Phil Kirtland.

Phil Kirtland admired Jack in many ways, but he had not learned to like him, even though once Jack had saved his life.

Jack was his rival in the athletic world of Cranford.

The year before, Kirtland had led everything in Cranford, in the way of sports. Now Jack Lightfoot had shot into sudden prominence, and Kirtland seemed to have lost to him the crown of successful leadership.



In addition to this, as if this were not enough for a youth like Kirtland, who loved to stand in the lime-light and hear his name cheered, Kirtland's pride and keen sensitiveness had been hurt deeply in another way.

Those who have read these stories will remember that Jack had been knocked down on the ice of Cranford Lake, at the close of a skating carnival, and a thousand dollars, confided to his care by old Mr. Snodgrass, had been taken from him.

He had caught sight of the clothing of the boy who did this, and believed that boy was Kirtland. He had accused Kirtland to his face. Later it was found that the thief was a relative of Kirtland.

Kirtland had never forgiven that charge which Jack made against him.\*

Now, hearing this slander that was being blown about the town of Cranford, Kirtland was almost on the point of going down to Jack's home at once and of accusing him to his face of setting that fire in the boat-house.

But cooler reason came to Phil Kirtland. He was far from being a fool. In fact, there were not many brighter boys in Cranford, and he was a pretty good judge of character, too.

"Pshaw, I think that must be a lie!" he said to himself, finally, when he had taken time to think the matter over carefully. "Jack didn't start that fire; but I think I see who did. I see now through the whole thing. Jubal Marlin did that sure. The parrot was down there, and Jubal was seen going in that direction with a mask or something over his face. Jack followed him, and Tom was with him, of course. They caught Jubal there, and perhaps there was a fight, and that's what knocked Jack out. Jack is pretending ignorance now to protect Jubal. And, of course, Tom wouldn't say anything, just because he's Jack's cousin. Well, I know what I'll do."

Having come to a decision, after discovering what seemed to him must be the truth, Phil Kirtland walked boldly down to Jack's home.

He found Jack in the shed room with Tom Lightfoot.

Jack had been working on an oar blade, at his workbench. Tom, as usual, had his nose stuck in a book.

"Hello, glad to see you!" cried Jack.

Yet he hardly knew whether he was really glad or not, for something in Kirtland's face made him feel that trouble was coming.

Kirtland refused the chair which Jack offered him.

"No, I'll stand here. You may want to kick me out, when you hear what I'm going to say; and it will be better for me to be near the door, in case you do."

He tried to smile, and failed signally in the effort.

Kirtland was sorry he had found Tom there; but he was resolved to speak his mind, now that he had come to the house.

So he made his statement against Jubal.

"And I want to say to you," he added, "as captain of the academy boat crew, that we will not race your crew, if Jubal Marlin is to pull an oar in your boat."

Kirtland's statement angered Tom quite as much as Jack; for it accused both of virtual lying, by their silence, for the purpose of shielding Jubal Marlin.

"Do you think I'd lie about it?" said Tom, hotly.

"Or, that I would?" Jack added.

"Not exactly that. You're simply not telling what you know. And we won't row that race, if Jubal is to be in the high-school boat."

Kirtland was sure Jack would not want to take Jubal out of the racing crew, since he promised to be one of the very best oarsman on the lake. At the same time, he was resolved now not to row against Jubal. And it did not trouble him that, in making this refusal, he was depriving Jack of one of his best men.

"Then I won't row in the academy boat, and that's flat!" Tom declared, his face burning hot. "You can

\*See No. 2, "Jack Lightfoot's Hockey Team; or, The Rival Athletes of Old Cranford."



get another man, Kirt; I won't pull another oar for you!"

Kirtland had hardly counted on this. He did not want to lose Tom Lightfoot out of his crew. In his opinion, Tom was even a better oarsman than Jubal, quite as good as Jack Lightfoot, or himself.

Jack was trying hard to control his quick temper, was, in fact, fighting with it to keep it down. He wanted to leap at Kirtland, take him by the throat, and hammer him in the face. His hands trembled on the tool he held on the workbench.

"Kirtland," he said, slowly, though his voice shook, "don't you think you'd better withdraw that?"

"Take back what I've said about Jube Marlin?"

"What you've said about us?"

"If you didn't follow Jube down there, who did you follow down there?" he demanded. "I've heard some things!"

"What have you heard?"

Jack was still struggling with his strong desire to spring at Kirtland's throat.

"I've heard more than I'm going to tell you; I've heard even that *you* are the one who started that fire. I don't believe that——"

"Thank you!" said Jack, his voice still trembling.

"No, I don't believe that. But I believe Jube did, and I think you fellows know a good deal more than you're willing to say. Jack wouldn't want to give Jube away. He knows if he did Jube would be ruled out of the crew, and also arrested. And Jack wouldn't want to lose so good an oarsman. But I refuse to go into the race, if Jube Marlin is to touch an oar in it."

He turned as if he were through and ready to go away.

"Kirtland," said Tom, his eyes blazing, "if you weren't my captain, I'd tell you right to your teeth that you're a slandering liar."

Kirtland whirled round toward him.

"Do you call me that?" he asked, angrily.

"I *will* call you that, if you repeat that I know anything about this affair more than I've been willing to tell everybody. And I'll fight you, even if you are my captain; I'm not in the habit of being called a liar by anybody!"

Tom's anger was boiling over.

Phil Kirtland cooled somewhat, when he saw how he had aroused the wrath of Tom Lightfoot.

Jack turned back to the workbench, and tried to take up his tools, though he was still trembling.

"See here, Tom," said Kirtland; "and you, too, Jack! I didn't come down here to get into a fight. Somebody tried to burn that boathouse, on which I've spent a good deal of money. In my opinion, the evidence points to Jubal Marlin. I've never said that either of you fellows did it, but I did think you have kept still just to shield Jube."

"Why should I want to shield him?" Tom demanded.

"You couldn't tell without giving Jack away; that's what I thought, and what I meant."

Jack turned from the workbench now and moved toward him.

There was an unsettled fight between Jack Lightfoot and Phil Kirtland. In defending Wilson Crane, one day, from an assault made by Kirtland, Jack had struck Kirtland and knocked him down. Neither was likely to forget that. So, it would not have taken a great deal at this time to have stirred up that old trouble, and blows would have resulted.

"Don't you believe what I've said?" Jack asked.

Kirtland waved his hand airily, in his old way.

"Jack, don't get gay! I have said, and say it over, that I'm willing to believe that neither you nor Tom know anything more than you've told publicly. At the same time, neither of you know who the fellow was that you followed down to the boathouse. His face was masked, and he was carrying that parrot. I say the fellow was Jube Marlin. You think he wasn't."



You two can think what you please. And I say further that if Jube pulls an oar in the high-school boat my crew will not row. That's all I've got to say."

He turned to the door.

"What if we should find that one of your own men, or one of your friends, set that fire?" Jack asked.

Kirtland stopped again, in the doorway.

"That's the silliest notion yet!" he declared.

"You may think so. But don't you remember when Ben Birkett was here? He accused me of chopping his ice yacht and made a lot of trouble about it, and we found out afterward, by his own confession, that he chopped it himself, to make people think I did it, and so create hard feelings against me."

"You don't mean that *I* started that fire, to throw suspicion on *you*?" Kirtland fairly shouted.

"No, I never have thought anything of the kind; but I have thought it is possible that some member of your athletic club, or some one who dislikes me, may have done it, hoping to throw suspicion against me, or against some member of my crew. Just think that over, Kirtland. We're not going to quarrel about this thing. I refuse to quarrel with you."

Kirtland turned to the door once more.

"And just remember," Tom shouted at him, "that I'm out of your old boat crew! You can get some one else to pull my oar when that race comes off."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DISCOURAGEMENT.

Jack Lightfoot and Phil Kirtland now began two entirely different lines of investigation, for the purpose of discovering who had tried to burn the boathouse.

Phil Kirtland went to work on the theory that it had been the work of one of the high-school boys, and he stuck to his belief in the guilt of Jubal Marlin. He tried to get some evidence that would convict Jubal, but failed to find a scrap of proof that he could use. There

was gossip and conjecture enough, but it was of no value.

The first thing that Jack did was to sit down quietly in his room at home and run over the entire situation in his mind.

He took name after name of boys who might possibly be mean enough to do a thing of that kind.

Having selected certain names, he studied the actions of these boys, as he met them on the streets, or saw them elsewhere.

It seemed to him that if any one of them were guilty he would betray himself by his actions, his looks, or his words.

If guilty, he would try to avoid Jack; or, if he came near Jack, his actions would not be natural—he would either be too forward and fresh, or he would be uncommonly silent, this depending somewhat on his natural disposition.

As Jack sought to carry on this rather novel method of search, he was forced to encounter many humiliations. People who had been cordial to him seemed now and then to want to avoid him.

These things flushed Jack's face and caused his heart to beat unpleasantly fast.

The progress, or lack of progress, he made was, also, discouraging.

One by one he cast aside the names he had chosen, convinced that the boys bearing those names were not guilty.

It began to seem, finally, that he would not be able to strike a clew at all.

Then, with the gossips of the town giving tongue against him, as they had done once before, with Prof. Sanderson whispering malicious things about him and about his father, Jack began to be blue and discouraged.

It was his old enemy, come back in a new form; the enemy he had learned to know under many disguises, but which he did not now recognize.



"Oh, what's the use?" Jack asked himself, as he came home one evening, tired and despondent.

He had been practicing with his boat crew on the lake. There were five in the crew, counting the coxswain. Jubal had pulled an oar. Jack, convinced solidly of Jubal's innocence, was resolved to stand by him and insist that he should not be humiliated by being forced out of the boat by the objections of Phil Kirtland or anyone else.

The practice itself had been inspiring that afternoon; nevertheless, Jack came home blue as the proverbial indigo bag. Some persons, whose good opinion he desired, had apparently shunned him as he came up the street, and one of those people was Kate Strawn.

Jack believed that Brodie Strawn, her brother, had been making her believe some of the things that were being spoken against him.

Kate was an impulsive girl, with not a deceitful or hypocritical bone in her body. If she liked anyone she showed it; and if she distrusted him, she could not help showing that, too. She had always been friendly with Jack, since the time he saved her from the ice hole, and had often gone even out of her way to speak to him. But this evening she had not looked in his direction, but had crossed the street as if to avoid him when she saw him coming.

Feeling sure he knew what Kate Strawn thought, Jack entered the yard with his face afire and his heart burning.

His mother spoke to him, as he was about to go up to his room.

"What is it, Jack?" she asked, noticing his red face and confused manner.

"Just nothing," he said; "only a good many of the people are believing that I know something more about that fire at the boathouse than I'm willing to tell. It hurts me, to have them think such things about me."

"It hurts me, too!" she said. "And that odious Mrs.

Brown keeps running in here every fifteen minutes, with something new on the subject."

Jack went on upstairs.

Mrs. Brown was their nearest neighbor. In the country, or in a small town, the woman who lives nearest you, expects to take privileges, and will run into the house whenever it pleases her, with the gossip of the day. Mrs. Lightfoot did not like it; but she could not think of making an enemy of Mrs. Brown by ordering her out of the house when she came. Hence, she had been forced to endure almost as much torture over that mysterious fire as Jack himself.

"Oh, what's the use?" Jack grumbled, as he went up to his room.

He dropped into a chair, and looked through the window out at the lake. It was a beautiful view from that window, with the sky showing already the shadows of approaching night, and burning with red clouds low down along the western horizon.

But Jack hardly noticed the beauty of the evening sky.

"What's the use?" he thought. "I've tried and tried again, in this town, to do something and be something. What good does it do? If I try to get together a boat crew that will win, or a nine that can do something at baseball, why, all the fellows who are not on the nine are jealous! And when we defeat a team, if we have that good luck, as often as not the cry is raised by the other team that we didn't play fair, or took some advantage. And now see this! Just when I thought the people of the town were beginning to have a good opinion of me this happens. Tom and I went down there with the best of intentions. If we hadn't gone probably the boathouse, boats and everything, would now be in ashes. What do we get for it? We are accused of setting the fire, by some people; and others say that even if we didn't set it we are shielding the one who did, and that means Jubal. I know Jube is innocent. He's done some reckless things, but it seems



to me he's square in this. I believe he has lately been trying to do right, and I intended to stand by him. But——"

He threw out his hands in disgust.

"What's the use? No matter what Jube does, or says, hereafter, there will be people who'll say he can never do anything or be anything that is honest or honorable. Yes; and there are people in this town who will say that about me!"

Jack was so much discouraged by this view of his position that he almost felt like giving up, throwing the race to the winds, resigning his position as president of the athletic club, and just lying down on his back and surrendering.

Many a boy has been in the same position.

If he has good stuff in him he doesn't surrender.

Jack Lightfoot had good stuff in him.

Thinking the matter over, he turned again to the solution of the problem of the fire.

He began again to go over the names of boys who might have some reason for wanting to burn the academy boathouse.

As he did so, he jumped like a flash to a different track, for a new suggestion came to him.

Lafe Lampton and Tom Lightfoot, coming down for their evening visit, came up to the room.

The delight of seeing these good friends and true shone in Jack's rather fair face and in his gray-blue eyes. It drove away the somberness that had depressed him and spoiled his good looks, and made him again what he was—a bright, winning and handsome boy.

"Tom, Lafe," he cried, "can you think of anyone who would want to burn *our* boathouse? I believe we've been on the wrong track from the very first."

They stared.

"Nobody has tried to burn our boathouse," Lafe objected.

"But can you think of anyone who might want to?"

Both Lafe and Tom began to run over sundry names.

They could finally settle on but two—the names of Bat Arnold and Nick Flint.

Both were reckless fellows, who might burn a boathouse or anything else, if it served their purpose, or enabled them to deliver a blow against an enemy.

Bat Arnold was a member of the academy athletic club, too.

Nick and Bat had conspired against Jack once, but had been so signally defeated in their effort against him that it seemed they must have learned a lesson.

"I think I can find out if Bat had anything to do with that," said Tom. "He'll talk with some of the boys who are my friends, and I can find out through them. But I don't even yet understand what you mean—for your boathouse was not set on fire; it was the academy boys' boathouse."

"Whoever set the fire might have made a mistake," said Jack, smiling mysteriously; "they might have gone to the wrong boathouse."

"Neither of those fellows could have made such a mistake," Tom insisted, "any more than I could have made it; they know the location of the boathouse too well."

Then the eyes of both Tom and Lafe opened wide, when Jack told them what conclusion he had reached.

"I believe I'm right," he declared; "and I believe I can prove it!"

In order to "prove it" he took Kennedy, the constable and night watch into his confidence, and set Kennedy to work.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### GETTING READY FOR THE RACE.

Jack Lightfoot did not cease practicing with his crew on the lake, and he did not take Jubal Marlin out of the crew. Jube was great with an oar; and, besides, Jack had determined to stand by him.

The race was to be rowed in four-oared racing shells. The interest of the people of Cranford in the ap-



proaching boat race was not diminished by the mystery of the fire which had come so near destroying the academy boathouse.

It was increased by that, instead of diminished. So that now, whenever Jack and his crew, or Phil Kirtland and his crowd, were out on the lake for practice work, the shore was covered with people, and many were out in boats, little and big, watching the practice work. Boys bellowed through megaphones, and the people cheered, when good work was done by either crew.

Anyone who loves the ripple of blue water, the tang of the breeze from lake or ocean, the flashing of oars, or the glint of white sails, must of necessity love such a race as the boys of the high school and the academy were preparing for at Cranford.

Nothing is much prettier or more attractive than a boat's crew of lithe, vigorous young fellows, through whose veins pulses the vigorous red blood of youth, as they bend and sway in a racing shell, speeding their cranky boat, their bodies moving rhythmically and the flashing oars rising and falling with machine-like regularity.

Such a sight always stirred the enthusiasts of Cranford, and these were a goodly number.

Talk of the practice of the crews and of the mystery of the fire had crowded out almost every other subject of conversation for the people of Cranford. They forgot, apparently, that the Japs and the Russians were pounding away at each other in far-off Manchuria with cannons and rifles, forgot national and local politics, and some even seemed to neglect matters of business, as they talked of the race. Jerry Mulligan seemed even to forget that he was a cart driver and apparently believed that he had become a millionaire, to judge from the many bets he tried to make on this race, always leaning to the side of the high-school crew.

This high-school boat crew was composed of Jack Lightfoot, Lafe Lampton, big, red-headed Bob Brews-

ter, and Jubal Marlin, with little Nat Kimball as coxswain.

Sometimes Jack acted as coxswain; but as a usual thing he pulled the stroke oar, setting the pace for the others.

The supple grace which concealed the power which Jack Lightfoot threw into his stroke was enough to appeal to anyone's sense of strength and rhythmic beauty. It was strong, true, and as regular as the beat of a clock.

As Jack thus pulled stroke, every oar rising and falling and flashing with his, the voice of little Nat Kimball, the coxswain, would float musically across the water. And Nat was a good coxswain, for he had been carefully taught by Jack Lightfoot himself.

"All together! All together! Now! Now!" Nat would call in his musical voice through his megaphone.

Nat was lithe as a cat, though small, and he had piercing, black eyes, a thin face, and hair so black and shiny that it always seemed oiled.

Ned Skeen had wanted that position as coxswain. Jack had turned Ned's ambitions down; for Ned, while a good fellow, was too nervous—so nervous that he was likely to lose his head at a critical time, and that might have cost them the race.

Ned saw the strength of Jack's reasoning on this point, and afterward contented himself with standing on shore and swinging his cap, or waving it as he helped to paddle another boat along, in which boys rowed merely as spectators of the practice work of the crew.

On the morning of the day on which the race was to be held, Jack Lightfoot pulled with his crew over the course.

This covered two miles, from the starting line far up Cranford Lake, where the little American flag fluttered, to the finishing line marked by two boats out in front of the boathouses.

Though Jack and his crew went over this course now



they did not try to make great time. They were but keeping in trim, and familiarizing themselves even more thoroughly with the lay of things.

Early as was this practice hour, many boats were out on the water, gliding round like water bugs, and a number of spectators were on the shore.

In the midst of the spectators sat Mr. Snodgrass, in his shining buggy. No one was more interested than Snodgrass, for he had offered the beautiful silver cup now displayed in the drug-store window as the prize.

The shell of the high-school crew, with Jack pulling the stroke oar, glided up to the float in front of the boathouse.

Scarcely a minute later the crew were out on the float and lifting the shell out of the water.

When the shell was housed, the crew rubbed down in the boathouse, donned their ordinary clothing, and again came outside.

"Glad to see that you're doing such good work," said Snodgrass, taking Jack by the hand, as the other came up to the buggy. "That handsome cup up there in the drug store is waiting for your crew—if you can win it!"

He laughed and passed his fingers over his grizzled beard, while his keen old eyes brightened.

"We intend to try to win it!" said Jack.

"You mean you intend to win it!"

"We intend to win it; yes, sir, that's what I mean."

"That's good. Phil Kirtland says the same thing. So we're going to have a great race this afternoon, and that's what we want. And the lake is going to be just right for it, I think."

Snodgrass had the reputation of being close and hard in money matters, yet he had opened his heart and his pocketbook in rather an unusual way, since he had taken a fancy to Jack Lightfoot and sought to help him and his crew. But for all that, Snodgrass

was perfectly willing to see the cup go to Kirtland's crew, if they made a better race and won it.

As Jack stood there talking with Mr. Snodgrass, Phil Kirtland and his crew came down to their boat-house, and, after donning their rowing suits, began to get out their shell for the purpose of going over the course.

Snodgrass watched them, and Jack did the same.

Phil's crew consisted of Phil himself, Brodie Strawn, Connie Lynch, Nate Silingsby and Ben Henderson, all strong, sturdy rowers. Silingsby, the lightest of them, was coxswain. Phil pulled stroke. Henderson had been put on the crew in place of Tom Lightfoot, who had declared he would not row that day. Kirtland pretended to believe that Henderson was fully as good an oarsman as was Tom Lightfoot, but in his heart he knew better.

Yet Phil had a fine, strong, skillful lot of rowers, and it really was a question which boat crew was the better. The race would decide that. Kirtland was a fine stroke; there were few better oarsmen than Brodie Strawn; and Connie Lynch, the blue-eyed Irish lad, was as strong as an ox and lithe as a panther. Henderson, too, was good with an oar; and so was Silingsby.

"You'll have to do great work to beat them," said Snodgrass, smiling and tugging at his grizzled beard, as he watched Kirtland's crew, and in his mind's eye saw the race that was to come. "That's a good crew—a mighty good crew!"

"Yes, we'll have to row the race of our lives, if we beat them," was Jack's thought, as he walked on homeward.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE PROTEST AGAINST JUBAL.

Jack Lightfoot was decidedly nervous over the outlook, as he set out to walk down to the boathouse that



afternoon, where his crew were assembling, and the crowd was gathering to see the race.

He encountered Tom at the street corner.

"You've heard from Kennedy, I understand," said Tom.

"Yes, I have had two telegrams from him."

Tom hesitated before he spoke again.

"If that plan of yours turns out right and Jube is permitted by Kirtland to stay in your boat, I think I'll have to go into the academy boat, after all. You see, it's this way," he went on apologetically; "I don't want to seem to brag on myself, but I really think I am better with an oar in a race like that than Henderson. He's pretty good; but if the academy is to win they've got to have a crew not only pretty good, but mighty good. Now, don't laugh, for I mean it! They must have a crew that is at least as good as yours."

Jack smiled, for his cousin's serious manner amused him.

"If the crew is as good as yours," said Tom, "then it's an open question as to which will win."

"Many think it's an open question, anyway."

"With two crews, neither any, or not much if any, better than the other, some little thing may throw the race. But if one crew is a little the weaker, the stronger crew has the best show. You see what I mean?"

"I understand you; yes."

"Well, now, even if I am your cousin and your friend, I'm still an academy boy; and as such I want the academy crew to win this race. It isn't a personal matter with me at all, but a school matter—a thing of school pride. It won't be pleasant for me to have the town roaring for the high-school crew, if you win, and to feel that maybe if I'd been in the academy boat I might have helped a little to make it different. I was red-hot against Kirtland that day, and I still don't like what he said and what he did. I shan't think of going into his boat, if he stands to what he said and gets

Jubal ruled off your crew. But if he lets Jube stay there. I'll row in his boat."

When they reached the boathouses they found Kirtland already making his "kick" against Jubal Marlin. He was talking to the referees, men of the town, disinterested, who were to decide all such matters and award the cup to the winning crew.

Jubal stood by while Kirtland made this protest against him, and Jubal was angry.

"It's an outrage!" he cried. "He's sayin' them things jist to rule me aout, by hemlock, because he thinks we can't get another oar right naow as good as I am. That makes me mad, by gravy! I never done the things he's accusin' me of, neither; and I never thought of doin' 'em."

Jubal had brought the parrot down, and had placed it in charge of Ned Skeen. Ned was pleased with his charge, for the parrot was already whooping for Jack Lightfoot, and, as one of the boys said, "haha-ing to beat the band."

Lafe called Jack aside.

Lafe's face was serious, and that was a thing not common. He had a ruddy face and sky-blue eyes, and the sky-blue eyes now looked troubled.

"Jube will be thrown out," he said. "Have you heard from Kennedy?"

"Yes, I've had two telegrams from him."

"Will he get there in time?"

"If the train is on time."

"But the train is late; I heard so from one of the boys. It's a quarter of an hour behind time now. Oh, we fellows are done up! Who've you got to take Jube's place?"

"Saul Messenger."

"Oh, he can't row worth shucks!"

"He isn't half bad," Jack urged. "But I haven't given up"

"You think they won't rule Jube off? Well, they will. If we can't clear him of that charge which Kirt



makes against him, off he goes sure as thunder, and I know it; and Saul can't half fill his place."

"I'm going to fight for time till that train gets in," said Jack.

"But you know the rules!"

Lafe lugged out and looked at his open-faced silver watch.

"The race is to start at three o'clock sharp. We've got to be at the flag ready to start when the starter gives the signal, so we'll have to leave here long before three. The train is due in five minutes. It won't be here."

"I'll delay the thing by talking," said Jack. "I think I can hold the referees for a while, anyhow, and I'll try it. Then, after they decide, the crews will require time to dress, or rather undress, and get the shells into the water. I'm going over there now to answer Kirtland and stand up for Jubal."

Lafe took out an apple and bit into it.

Instantly he felt better.

"I believe you can do any old thing, Jack," he said, his sky-blue eyes shining. "Just talk the arms off of those referees. Don't let anybody get in a word, if you can help it; talk 'em to death! Hold them there, discussing the eligibility of Jubal, until that train comes in."

That was what Jack Lightfoot now set out to do.

Every member of his crew knew why he was anxious for the train to get in.

Kennedy, employed and instructed by Jack, was away, trying to get evidence that would fix the crime of firing the boathouse on the real perpetrator, and so clear Jubal. If he arrived with proof, and it was satisfactory, Jubal would not be ruled out of the crew. If he did not arrive in time, or if his statement, when he came, was not satisfactory, Jubal would be put out, and the chances of the high-school crew winning the race would be much lessened.

Before going up to the referees who were listening

to Kirtland's statement, which Kirtland had reduced to writing and was backing with argument, Jack tore a sheet out of a notebook, penciled a few lines on it, and called to one of his friends.

"Hustle that to the telegraph office," he whispered, putting it into the boy's hands. "It's a telegram to Kennedy, asking him to wire his statement, if he finds he can't get here; and wire something, anyway, if he can. Now, cut out; get it there quick. Maybe it will reach him."

The boy darted away at a hot run, and Jack turned to the referees.

Jubal was walking about on the outside of the crowd, almost in tears of vexation.

Jack made his way through the crowd, and stood listening attentively to what Kirtland said.

The three referees sat on a raised platform, which gave them a good view of the lake and particularly of the finishing line.

"May I bring Jubal himself before you, that you may hear his story?" Jack requested of the referees, when Kirtland finished.

This was so reasonable a request that no one could object to it.

Jack called to Jubal, and the latter came forward, his homely face and wide mouth showing distress and a hint of tears.

Jack requested Jubal to tell the referees just what he knew—what he did after the meeting of the high-school athletic club that night in the gym., and especially when and how he came down to the lake after the fire.

This Jubal did, with many characteristic exclamations, and it took time.

When Jubal was through and the referees had asked him a few things, Jack saw that they had made up their minds to rule him off the crew, not because he had been proven guilty, but because Kirtland would not withdraw his objection.



Jack interposed now, and began to ask questions of Jubal, making him go over the story again, with many details.

"I don't see what is the object of all this," said one of the referees. "We have already heard this story."

Jack declared now that he had a statement which he wished to make himself, and asked the privilege.

Jack was fighting with all his might for time, without showing what he was really after.

Every minute he hoped to hear the whistle of the train which would inform him that Kennedy was coming.

Just what Kennedy had discovered Jack was not yet aware himself, so could not use it.

Kennedy had set out to follow a certain clew given him by Jack.

He had sent Jack a telegram, and followed it with another.

The first telegram ran:

"Have got men. Will come first train."

The second message read:

"Will be in time to help you out."

Jack now told how he and Tom had followed the individual they saw masked, and all the incidents grouped about that pursuit and the fire. He went into details and told everything; of how they had suspected Jubal, and then had changed their opinion.

Having done so, he called for Tom.

Tom went through the same story, in much the same way.

"But Kirtland doesn't withdraw his objection," said one of the referees, growing tired. "We'll have to bring this thing to an end. We're not learning anything new."

Jack continued to talk, saying that he wanted now to question Jerry Mulligan.

This was refused by the referees.

Then he asked the privilege of questioning the Buttons, and supported this in a somewhat lengthy speech.

Again he was overruled.

Out beyond the crowd he saw Lafe Lampton walking about uneasily, and now and then looking at his watch.

"Overruled!" said the spokesman of the referees. "Unless Mr. Kirtland withdraws his objection we shall declare that Jubal Marlin is not to row in the high-school boat."

"I refuse to withdraw it!" Kirtland shouted. "They have simply shown that it may not have been Jubal. I——

Too-oo-oot!

The whistle of the delayed train blew for Cranford.

"All right!" said Jack, his heart leaping. "Then we'll ask that this investigation be delayed a few minutes—a very few minutes—until Mr. Kennedy can get here. He is on that train. If I am not mistaken he will bring absolute proof that Jubal was not near this boathouse and had nothing to do with that fire."

"But the time is up now!" shouted Kirtland, angry and alarmed. He had determined to exclude Jubal. "We demand our rights. That race is to be at three o'clock sharp, and we've barely time to get to the starting point as it is. This is just a game for more delay."

The referees looked at their watches.

They were startled.

Jack had killed so much time that the hour for the race was almost at hand, and the referees themselves had not known it.

"Give me just a few more minutes," Jack now begged. "Kennedy has proofs, and he is on that train. I demand this as a right. Jubal is one of my best men, and we shall consider this an unfair attempt to rule him off unless we are permitted to introduce this testimony which is being brought by Kennedy."

Again Jack Lightfoot won his point.



The delayed train was already rolling into Cranford, and Jack was so earnest in declaring his belief that Kennedy had valuable proof that the referees granted a little more time, in spite of the objections of Phil Kirtland.

A carriage had been sent to the depot.

It was now seen coming down the street, the driver putting the whip to the horses.

The great crowd which had assembled at the lake-side, knowing something of what was going on, cheered, when the carriage came with a clatter of hoofs and a rattle of wheels up to the referees' stand, and Kennedy leaped out.

Jack's heart fell. He had expected that Kennedy would have a prisoner, or prisoners.

He had hurried to meet him, and he was one of the first to speak to him.

"What did you learn?" he asked.

"Everything," said Kennedy.

"It will clear Jubal?"

"You bet!"

Those who heard that lifted their voices in a ringing cheer. They were mostly Jack's friends. And the parrot, in charge of Ned Skeen, piped up:

"Hurrah for Jack Lightfoot! Ha-ha-ha—hah-hah-hah!"

Kennedy went at once before the referees.

"It was this way," he said, "and I'll make it short. Jack reached to the conclusion that the fellers who done that job of trying to burn the boathouse was enemies of his and had made a mistake, thinking it was the high-school boathouse. He suspected two fellers, and he sent me out.

"That took me to Mildale. When I got there I found that them two guys had skipped. That made me think Jack must be right, and that they'd cut out to get away from trouble. I found, by a little work, where they'd gone, and I follered hot. I cornered 'em in Gardner's Falls, where they had relatives. I worked a bluff on them there, and they confessed everything. They thought I knew the whole thing, so they up and told me how it was."

The excitement of the listeners was at fever pitch

now, as they crowded about the constable and the referees.

"Them two fellers," said Kennedy, lifting his voice, "was Tim Tewksbury and Barret Brown. Tewksbury was the pitcher for Mildale, in the baseball game played over there the other day between Mildale and Cranford; and Brown—that's his real name, and he's from Clam Harbor—was the umpire of that game."

The spectators rustled nervously and tried to get nearer. Jack Lightfoot felt like shouting. Those were the two youths he had picked out as suspects—Tewksbury and the umpire of the game at Mildale.

"There was a row at that ball game, and a fight, and Tewksbury was already particularly mad at the Cranford boys, because Jube Marlin, he said, had got a relative over here and tried to marry her to a deaf-mute, which was one of Jube's little tricks to try to make money. After the game was over, the umpire was jumped onto by Saul Messenger and badly hammered, because Saul thought his decisions were all against Cranford."\*

"They were, too!" yelled several voices in the crowd.

"Well, Tewksbury and that umpire air not any better than common jail birds, it looks like," went on the constable. "They wanted to git even with Jack Lightfoot and his crowd. So they sneaked over here and tried to burn the high-school boathouse."

"But it was the academy boathouse!" some one shouted.

"That's right; they thought they was settin' fire to the high-school boathouse, though; that was jist their little mistake. That's what they confessed to me. They thought they'd take the parrot, as it belonged, they said, to this Miss Tewksbury that Jube coaxed over here; and they say it was the parrot that give 'em away. I've got 'em in jail at Gardner's Falls. Seeing that I wasn't going to let 'em go, they got a lawyer there and air goin' to fight for their release. But that's the story; and them's the two fellers who tried to burn the boathouse."

The yell that went up from the high-school boys and friends of Jack Lightfoot when Kennedy concluded his important testimony was simply deafening.

\*For full particulars, see No. 7, "Jack Lightfoot's Crack Nine; or, How 'Old Wagon Tongue' Won the Game."



Jack, in his fight for the good name of Jubal, had certainly won a glorious victory.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A HOT RACE FOR THE CUP.

Jubal Marlin was still a member of Jack Lightfoot's crew.

Tom had offered to take his old place in Kirtland's boat.

Kirtland had flushed in confusion when Tom made this offer, for Tom had said, with very positive emphasis:

"It is not for you alone, Kirtland, that I offer to do this, but for the academy. If you think I can help you to win this race I'll go in the boat, though I did say I wouldn't. But if Henderson prefers to stay in, or you prefer that he shall, that settles it, and I've no hard feelings. I'm an academy boy. Jack is my cousin; yet that does not make me unwilling to do my very best to help the academy crew to win."

And Kirtland had taken him, while Henderson had been only too glad to relinquish the oar which he doubted his ability to handle in the best manner. He, like Tom Lightfoot, had simply sunk himself out of sight for the good of the academy crew.

"Oh, we're going to have the race of the year right here!" declared Mr. Snodgrass, when he saw the shells going into the water. "Boys who will fight for each other and stand up for each other in that way are just the boys to make a great thing out of a race like this."

The water front was now alive with boats. Some were sailboats, but the majority were rowboats, big and little, with a few small naphtha launches. Nearly every one showed a flag at the stern. They were filled with enthusiastic water lovers.

Cranford Lake boasted one little steamer, which ran only in the summer, and then did chiefly an excursion business, taking parties to picnic grounds at various points along the lake.

It came up bravely, with its whistle screaming and flags flying; and it was crowded with people.

It was a pretty sight to see the rival crews, dressed for the race, carry their light shells out upon the float,

raise the shells lightly above their heads, and then swing them over into the water, without a splash.

The people cheered and flags fluttered, as this was done, and the boys took their positions.

The crews stepped gingerly into the cranky shells, adjusted their sculls quietly, and then pushing away from the floats began to row toward the starting point, two miles up the lake.

A fleet of boats swung along by them, and further out, the little steamer, with a merry company on board, puffed along, blowing its shrill whistle at intervals. The shore line was black with spectators.

The day was perfect, too, though a bit of wind was beginning to breeze up. The hour was later than had been expected for the start, owing to the delay which Jack had brought about.

The light shells, driven by strong, young arms, began to leave all the other boats behind.

One of the sounds that lingered in Jack's memory, as his oar set the pace, was the screech of the parrot from the shore as the high-school shell pulled away from the float. Thus it had sounded:

"Cut-cut-cut-t-t-t—ha-ha-ha — hah-hah-hah! Hurrah for Jack Lightfoot!"

Jack had seen Ned Skeen chuck the bird encouragingly and hurrah himself.

The little steamer swung out into the middle of the lake, to be out of the way of the racing shells, and at the same time to give the company on its deck a fine view of the race from start to finish. The people at the landing could hardly tell anything about the start of the race, two miles from them.

When the starting stake was reached, Jack's crew brought the high-school shell round handsomely, and Kirtland did the same with his.

"By hemlock, I'm goin' tew do what I can naow tew beat yeou fellers, if I kill myself!" cried Jubal, unwonted emphasis in his words.

Jack's entire boat crew felt the same. They had not liked the tactics adopted by Phil Kirtland, and they were savage to win.

But, apparently, Kirtland's crew was quite as determined; and there was a grim look on the face of Tom Lightfoot.



Lafe Lampton scanned Kirtland's crew as they brought their shell in at the starting line.

"It's going to hustle us to beat them. Kirtland, Brodie, Connie Lynch and Tom Lightfoot—they're all great!"

But Lafe did not say this aloud.

In a boat near by sat a crew of men, among them the starter, with pistol lifted.

There was a momentary hush of suppressed excitement. It was as if these sturdy rowers halted to catch breath before leaping into the battle.

"Are you ready?" came in the sharp voice of the man with the pistol.

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

Both Kirtland and Jack answered, gripping their oars.

Bang!

The pistol roared.

Eight shining, dripping sculls—four in each boat—dipped as one blade.

Eight muscular fellows straightened back on the sliding seats of the cockle-shell craft; and the boats seemed to leap, to flash forth, as if they possessed life.

The report and the smoke of the starter's pistol and the jump of the boats was heard and seen in the boats down toward the middle of the line, and a series of cheers came ringing softly over the rippling waters.

Jack Lightfoot's heart seemed to expand and every fiber of his lithe young body tingled. This was worth while! This was like life itself; strange, stirring, vibrating, a thing to arouse and warm the pulses and the whole being.

Again the cheers from far down the lake rocked to the rowers on the wings of the wind.

Side by side the shells shot along seeming to leap forward whenever the rowers came back with the steady pull, and the oars flashed and glittered and dripped silver.

The crews were rowing with machine-like precision and regularity.

And how beautiful it all was! The flashing gleam of the sculls just before the catch, the clean finish as they came shining out of the blue water, the swaying of

the bodies of the rowers! It was the poetry of motion. And speed was there, too—almost marvelous speed.

The little steamer seemed to be coming at a swift pace toward the racing shells, yet it was stationary; the fleet of small boats out on the lake seemed also to have that swift motion toward the shells. Even the boat-houses, and the black mob of people on the shore there, appeared also to be moving at quick pace up the lake.

It was all illusion. The shells were simply flying toward the steamer, the small boats, and toward the boathouses, in whose front lay the line which the winning craft must first cross.

The steamer's whistle broke into a shrill roar, and the crowds, ever coming nearer, seemed to be yelling ever more loudly. Flags were waving.

Jack's mind was on none of these things.

He saw that he was not gaining—that Kirtland's boat was racing him side by side. In Kirtland's boat Tom Lightfoot was pulling with the strength of a galley slave.

"Hit it up, fellows!" said Jack, and increased his stroke a trifle.

Kirtland, seeing this, increased his own stroke a little; and the two boats were still racing side by side.

Every member of Jack's crew was doing his whole duty. But not one of them, not even Jubal, who was pulling with greater strength and skill than he had ever before shown, was outdoing Jack himself. And still Jack was not touching the limit of his strength.

In the stern, with his hands on the guiding ropes Nat Kimball sat, his black eyes glittering, his lean face pale, his lips apart, watching every opportunity for an advantage to be gained by steering.

The mile-flag—the halfway flag—was passed.

Near this the steamer had stationed itself.

Again its whistle screamed. And the people on the deck cheered loudly, and waved handkerchiefs and parasols, as the two racing shells shot by, cutting the water.

By the output of tremendous exertion Kirtland's boat began to gain.

"Pull!" said Nat Kimball, when he saw that. "Pull,



fellows! Break your backs! Pull! Altogether! Now—now—now—now!”

He timed the strokes with his words.

The high-school boat drew up, and again was racing side by side with Kirtland's.

The fleet of small boats seemed to be flying right into the faces of the straining crews, and the boathouses and the finishing line were also coming nearer at every stroke.

To the people massed on the shore and out in the boats the two shells presented a beautiful sight, as they raced now toward the finish, on that last mile-stretch of blue water.

Kirtland and his crowd had named their boat *Lake Queen*.

Jack's boat was *White Wings*, and the name appeared on it.

“Hit 'er up!” came in the musical voice of the coxswain. “We must make it, fellows! Hit 'er up! Now—now—now—now! We're nearing the line; get down to it—Break your backs!”

Jack had not put out his full strength yet, not deeming it best to exhaust himself before the approach of the finish.

But now, having put his boat again by the side of Kirtland's, and knowing that the end of the race was near, he bent to the oar with all the heart and strength and skill that was in him. He forgot himself in that moment; only the thought remained that he must—must—win!

He quickened his stroke a little, yet without fussiness of catch or lift in the water; it was a smooth stroke, which brought the blade up clean with the water slipping from it like oil.

“Pull!” cried Nat, his face still paler and his eyes feverishly bright. “Pull, fellows; we've got to pull! That's it—now you're doing it right; now—now—now—now! Pull! Pull!”

How they pulled, encouraged by the coxswain, and following Jack's stroke—which was so smooth, so strong, so true! Jack's boat began to gain, inch by inch.

Phil saw it, and so did Tom Lightfoot; they bent to their oars, and the others in the academy boat did the same.

A great yelling rose thunderously from the small boats and from the shore.

Jack's boat still gained, just a little—a little.

Inch by inch it forged along, gaining.

Jack's powerful stroke, reserved in the entirety of its strength until near the finish, was telling the tale now.

Hard as the opposing crew rowed, they could not get back into the position they had held; nor could they keep the rival boat from making that gain.

It was not inches now. A foot had been gained—two feet—a yard!

The yelling rose even more thunderously.

Jack was deaf to it all.

His face had gone pale, his hair blew in the wind, his blue-gray eyes seemed to have shrunk in size, or contracted, as if they feared the light; his chest was heaving with the mighty exertion.

He felt that he must win! He was resolved to win!

The steamer came churning down the lake, sending up her screech.

The swarming small boats began to converge toward the finishing line and toward the boathouse.

“We'll win!” screamed Nat. “Hit 'er up! Pull, my hearties! Pull, you dear old boys—pull, pull, *pull!*”

He bent forward in his seat as if he would hurl his body forward.

There was a sudden spurt on the part of the boat *White Wings*, and frenzied shouts told that the high-school boys had won the hard-fought race.

It had been a hot race, but Jack Lightfoot's winning oar had gathered in the cup, which was henceforth to adorn the high-school gym. and be a source of pride to every member.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 9, will be “Jack Lightfoot, the Young Naturalist; or, The Mystery of Thunder Mountain.” This is a stirring story of a boys' outing in the big woods and hills beyond Cranford Lake. What the boys do, the fine times they have, and the mystery which puzzles them at Thunder Mountain, will certainly appeal to every boy's heart and imagination.



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